

Bohemia Walled Garden Association
Trustee Annual Report
For the year January - December 2020
Charity Commission report & for AGM in 2021

The Bohemia Walled Garden Association (BWGA)

The BWGA was formed in 2009 with the purpose of restoring, preserving and utilising the 19th Century Victorian walled garden in the Summerfields Wood. It aims to bring it back into active use for horticultural, educational, heritage and cultural activities.

The garden is owned by Hastings Borough Council (HBC) and leased to the BWGA for 25 years until 31 March 2036. The lease was renewed on the 5th January 2018 in line with the BWGA change of status to a Registered Charity. The garden is located in the Summerfields Wood which is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

Structure, Governance and Management

The BWGA is managed by volunteers. It is a registered Charity (Registration Number 1167167) as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with voting members other than its charity trustees. The organisation is managed by charity trustees and governed by the BWGA Charity Commission Constitution. It follows Charity Commission (CC) guidelines and must report annually to the CC to affirm its obligation to function for the 'public benefit' and to uphold the BWGA/CC objectives.

The BWGA trustees are supported by other BWGA members on a committee who have delegated roles. BWGA members, plot-holders and volunteers are overseen by the trustees in the everyday running of the garden, events, fundraising and educational activities. The local community is encouraged to participate in all the above.

The BWGA Charity Commission Objects:

- (1) To promote for the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.
- (2) To advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.
- (3) The provision of facilities for recreation and other leisure-time occupation in the interests of social welfare for the public at large with the object of improving their conditions of life.

To be a Charity it is necessary for the trustees to understand and to have regard to the 'public benefits' that the charity aims to provide as in the objectives. The Trustees Annual Report is to show how these objectives are being achieved. It is presented to the BWGA members at the AGM.

Members of the BWGA committee as confirmed at the 2020 AGM

Trustee(Chair)	Nigel Sinden
Trustee(Secretary - shared)	Justine Munro
Trustee(Secretary - shared)	Daniela Othieno
Trustee(Treasurer & Plot Secretary)	Sue Jirbandey

Previous trustees John Freedman, Dot Hill and Darren Windley stood down as trustees at the 2020 AGM. Their work over the years is much appreciated.

The current trustees are supported by other members in various activities.

Fund Raising and Income

Income in 2020 has come from the plot fees as the impact of the pandemic meant that events were not possible.

Expenditure

Due to the funding situation, expenses have been kept at a minimum. The only sizeable expense in 2020 was the annual insurance, which covers public liability and protects the individual trustees.

Any expenses incurred by our volunteers are reimbursed, following a procedure of proof of expense and payment is always authorised by two trustees.

Grant applications

No grant applications were made in 2020.

Financial Management

The BWGA operates a bank account which is mainly managed online and can make and receive payments by BACS. Plot fees can be made by BACS and we make payments by BACS for members expenses and other expenditures (like insurance, membership fees). The financial controls online are the same as physical cheque payments that need two authorisations.

Our accounts for 2020 have not been examined externally as they were under £10,000, for which external review is not required. The accounts are prepared by the treasurer and are presented at the AGM and submitted to the Charity Commission.

Insurance, Health and Safety and Policies

The BWGA has public liability insurance and this is renewed annually. The BWGA does risk assessments for all events and activities at the garden. The risk assessment is based on a template policy before being customised for each event. Various policy documents (including risk management, volunteering and privacy) are available on our web site.

Publicity, Information, Members and Supporters

Our main social media platform currently is Facebook. The garden has its own website (www.bohemiawga.org.uk) which contains a vast amount of information about the organisation.

We tried to communicate with the community via Facebook throughout 2020, sharing garden photos, events from other organisations and organised an online pumpkin carving activity.

We continue to use Mail Chimp to communicate with members and supporters, each maintained as separate lists. Members at times receive communications that are only relevant to them and they can vote at the AGM. The member group includes all plot-holders and active members who contribute in an active way to the garden's upkeep or development. Supporters are those who are keen to know what is going on and how to support us through our events.

Opening Times

The garden was closed to the public for much of 2020, but open for plot-holders throughout. Covid safe rules were in place, following the up to date government guidelines. When covid restrictions allowed, we did open (weather dependent) on Wednesdays and Sundays 10 - 12 in the growing season March-November.

Volunteers

The BWGA is still completely run by volunteers and we welcome new members from the local community. We continue to aim to use the varied skills of our volunteers. Some volunteers come for a short period of time and others make up the backbone of the BWGA garden volunteer team, particularly on the Wednesday and Sunday sessions.

We had a couple of Community WorkDays when restrictions allowed, where plot-holders and other garden members could come together to work at specific tasks and get to know each other. There also some ad hoc volunteer activity in the forage garden area.

The BWGA committee has tried to recruit more support for administrative tasks. The current committee members were able to keep the garden ticking over in 2020, partly because there was not much activity possible. However, with the lifting of restrictions and the possibilities to use the garden in more ways for the benefit of the community, there is a great need for administrative, fundraising and volunteer management work. Finding more support in these areas is a priority for the committee now, as the running and future development of the garden is very much dependent on this.

Groups who use the garden

There are areas for educational purposes at no cost, which the BWGA offers as a commitment to encouraging the appreciation and benefits of working in the garden.

Spaces are still allocated to Christchurch Primary School, Home education group, Recovery College (an NHS mental health recovery project) and a group of art students from Hastings College and remained so throughout lockdown restrictions, although the groups have not been able to use the plots. We were able to maintain them and hope that the activity will now pick up again.

Once covid restrictions allowed, the garden was used by a local choir for practice on a few occasions and we gratefully received a donation for this.

Plots

All plots have been in use throughout the year and any vacant plots have quickly been taken up by the next person on the waiting list. The lockdown seems to have encouraged more people to look into outdoor activity, while at the same time some of our plot-holders and members were not able to come to the garden for a big part of 2020. In most cases, the committee was able to arrange support in those cases. Plot fees have remained at £1.20 per square metre.

Education

Many educational resources can be downloaded from the website but educational activities or workshops had to pause in 2020.

Garden Management and Development

Members continued to maintain the borders, to give pleasure to members and visitors and also to benefit pollinating insects.

The grass area in front of the new wall, the top terrace chamomile lawn and the forage garden area was also maintained. Volunteers also improved the water collection and maintained the communal pumpkin area. A Community Work Day was also run to collect manure, which was well attended.

BWGA Public events in 2020

Due to covid restrictions, there were no public events in 2020. We organised an online Pumpkin Carving event, which encouraged people to share their creations.

BWGA Members events in 2020

We held a small covid safe members gathering.

External Public events in 2019

Due to covid restrictions, there were no external public events in 2020.

Conclusion

The BWGA works for the benefit of as many people in our community as possible so they can enjoy the environment of this lovely garden and area. We ensure that the walled garden is conserved, protected and improved for future generations to enjoy.

2020 has been an exceptionally challenging year for everyone. This continued into 2021, and the garden is only now slowly recovering, opening up again and finding more ways to engage with the community.

The BWGA trustees would like to thank all BWGA members, volunteers and partners for their support in 2020. We thank HBC for their continued cooperation in this joint effort. We also acknowledge and cannot stress enough, that to realise the potential of the garden as a real force for good in the community, especially in these new times, it will need more support, particularly with the administrative and fundraising activities that are essential now.

This report and the action plan show how the BWGA continues to meet the Charity Objects.

This report has been compiled and approved by the following trustees in post during 2020.

Sue Jirbandey	_____	20/09/2021
Justine Munro	_____	20/09/2021
Daniela Othieno	_____	20/09/2021
Nigel Sinden	_____	20/09/2021